levels. There is no proposal for establishing of KVK in Nizamabad and Khamam districts at present.

Special cell for HP apple farmers

†3522. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to form a special cell for the farmers of Himachal Pradesh to provide them fair price of apples so that they are protected from private institutions; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

Impact of import of edible oils

3523. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the shifting of palm oil to open licence category and the reduction of its import duty from 25 per cent to 15 per cent have resulted in increase in the import of edible oils, including palm oil;

(b) whether the proposed import of 70 million of palm oil from Malaysia would also destroy the coconut farming, especially in Kerala;

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government on both the issues; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) Following are the reasons for increase in the import of edible oils including palm oil:—

(i) Bringing the import of edible oil including palm oil under Open General Licence (OGL).

(ii) Drastic decline in the international prices of edible oils including palm oil.

(iii) Successive reduction in import duties from 65% in 1994 to 15% in July, 1998.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) to (d) Due to large scale import of palm oil (CPO and RBD Palmolein) from Malaysia and other countries, the coconut farmers in the country including the State of Kerala have been adversely affected on account of decline in the prices of copra and other oilseeds in the domestic market. However, in order to protect the interest of oilseeds and coconut growers in the country, the Government is implementing Minimum Support Price (MSP) Scheme and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED), which is the Central nodal agency for procurement of oilseeds including copra, enters into Market Support Operation as and when the prices fall below MSP. The NAFED has procured large quantities of copra under price support operation in order to help the coconut growers in the country including the State of Kerala. Besides this, Government has also increased the import duty on different categories of edible oils including palm oils *w.e.f.* 1st March, 2001 in order to protect the interest of oilseeds and coconut growers in the country.

Assistance for low rainfall in Karnataka

3524. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:
PROF. A. LAKSHMISAGAR:
SHRI H. K. JAVARE GOWDA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any survey of monsoon rains in the country;

(b) if so, which States are receiving low rainfall;

(c) whether Karnataka has been included in the list; and

(d) if so, whether any special assistance would be given to Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) The rainfall in the country is regularly monitored by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which includes monitoring of rainfall during monsoon season. The monsoon season, according to IMD, spans from 1st June to 30th September. For this purpose whole country has been divided in 35 meteorological sub-divisions. So far (from 1.6.2001 to 15.8.2001), the monsoon rains had been deficient (-20% to -59% of long period average) in 7 met. sub-divisions namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rayalseema in Andhra Pradesh, North Interior Karnataka and South Interior Karnataka.